

September 4, 2008

Coastal Conservation Association of Virginia

Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board  
C/O Jack Travelstead  
Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
2600 Washington Avenue  
Newport News, VA 23607

Dear RFAB Members:

Our Fisheries Management Committee has reviewed the proposals submitted for this cycle and has developed the individual positions noted below. We again (first done with the previous cycle) ranked the proposals in order of their relative importance and ability to address the original intent of the fund in light of a continuing danger associated with the possible siphoning off of much of the fund to supposedly offset overall state budgetary shortfalls. We feel those at the top of this list should be funded under any circumstances.

**Project Prioritization:**

1. *E. 2009 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (year 15)*
2. *F. Migrations of Adult Summer Flounder from Chesapeake Bay: Implications for Stock Structure*
3. *A. 2009 Children's Fishing Clinic*
4. *B. 2009 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic*
5. *G. Use of Pop-up Satellite Archival Tags (PSATs) to Determine the Fate, Movement, and Habitat Utilization of Red Drum Released from Virginia's Recreational Fishery*
6. *D. Improving Stock Assessment of Weakfish (year 2)*
7. *C. Federal Assistance (Wallop -Breaux) Matching Funds FY 2009*
8. *H. Seasonal Caloric Needs and Energy Intake of Chesapeake Bay's Predatory Fishes: Which Fuel Growth and Reproduction*

**Individual Project Comments:**

**Multi-Year Projects for Renewal:**

A. 2009 Children's Fishing Clinic (year12) (\$6000). **SUPPORT.** We continue to steadfastly support this and other similar programs that introduce an expanding number of youth to the enjoyment and conservation ethics of saltwater sport fishing. We feel there are tremendous dividends to be derived from such relatively modest financial outlays. As every visitor or volunteer to one of these events can attest, these activities are fun for all and give positive public exposure of our sport, while cultivating a new generation of salt water anglers.

B. 2009 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (year 8) (\$6,000). **SUPPORT.** See rationale in (A.) above.

C. Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds FY 2009 (\$321,820). **DO NOT SUPPORT.** Our lack of support of this request is consistent with our overall qualifications the previous three times the RFAB was approached to provide what we considered to be an undue level/source of funding for this program. However, unlike the past two cycles, in which the commercial fund was also tabbed (although proportionately at a much lower level), there apparently will be no commercial match. Such gross funding inequity only exacerbates the situation in which the recreational sector is expected to carry the load in order to preserve federal assistance to the program. Yet again, the comments regarding prior cycles still reflect our frustration regarding the issue: *"any future requests for WB offset should be financed entirely from the commercial fund, given the rationale that the WB federal portion is itself derived indirectly from the recreational sector"*, and *"that it is important the RFAB stands firm in demanding 100% of matching funding be derived from the commercial industry in all subsequent funding cycles"*. So, just like last year, the state finds itself in the situation of raiding the license fund to preserve its receipt of federal monies in order to maintain funding critical of efforts to manage our finfish resources.

D. Improving stock assessment of weakfish (year 2) (\$130,876). **MINIMAL SUPPORT.** Our position on this project remains similar to that when the proposal was first submitted. While we acknowledge the project's approach and methodology appear to be headed in the right direction to hopefully shed light on the dire straight of this species along the Atlantic coast, we continue to maintain that a portion of the funding for the project should come from the ASMFC, given that the species is present throughout the coast. Further comments from last year remain relevant: *"If this support (ASMFC) is not forthcoming, at least a portion of any local funding should be derived from the commercial sector in that this species has been a major target of their activities"*.

E. 2009 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (year 15) (\$86,698). **SUPPORT.** A tremendous program with a great deal of "bang for the buck", our comments from the two previous years continue to echo our thoughts: *"we remain committed to supporting this valuable, long-standing program. By continuing to provide critical data on virtually every recreationally significant species, it has been extremely important in the successful management of our saltwater fishery. As we have noted previously, the program not only contributes valuable finfish data for scientific and management communities, but also attracts an expanding cadre of volunteer taggers who have helped expand the conservation ethic through their efforts"*.

#### **New Projects:**

F. Migrations of Adult Summer Flounder from Chesapeake Bay: Implications for Stock Structure (\$83,605). **SUPPORT.** While a scientific study with no immediate guarantee of direct benefit to the recreational angler, it nevertheless passes muster in two key regards, and therefore elicits support from our membership. First, it is focused on what is

felt by most to be the most highly sought species by warm season saltwater anglers in the Commonwealth; and two, it would appear the results of the study would fulfill some voids in the current data base necessary for the proper management of the species. The latter point is especially significant given the current contentious state of “dueling parties” up and down the east coast that seem to be perpetually at odds regarding the relative health of the stock and the issue of regional allocation. It is hoped the petitioners, as some others have recently done, will be able provide the board and angling community with timely feedback on the progress of their research/findings.

G. Use of Pop-up Satellite Archival Tags (PSATs) to Determine the Fate, Movement, and Habitat Utilization of Red Drum Released from Virginia’s Recreational Fishery (\$93,569). **SUPPORT.** While we admittedly had some concerns regarding a small scale PSAT program designed to focus on system compatibility and movement tracking on striped bass last year, we feel this project will shed new light on the nature of red drum populations along the east coast. Several states along the Atlantic coast have taken various steps to further protect this hallmark inshore species, and it is hoped this proposal will help ascertain the degree fish frequenting our waters move locally and their relationship with the overall east coast population structure.

H. Seasonal Caloric Needs and Energy Intake of Chesapeake Bay’s Predatory Fishes: Which Fuel Growth and Reproduction (\$40,060). **DO NOT SUPPORT AT THIS TIME.** Even though this is a financially relatively modest proposal that also outlines goals to address food needs for a variety of important species, we would recommend the board first ensure the study does not duplicate past or ongoing efforts that have been directed to assess ecosystem interrelationships (NOAA?), and specific requirements of certain key predators (striped bass?), and (ChesMMAP). At this juncture we have not been alerted of any potential deficiency issues with any key prey species other than striped bass.

As in the past, we appreciate the opportunity to express our views on the allocation of our state's license funds. Thank you for your consideration.

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CCA of Virginia